



Wondrous Curiosities: Ancient Egypt at the British Museum

Stephanie Moser

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When the British Museum opened its doors more than two centuries ago, scores of visitors waited eagerly outside for a first glimpse of ancient relics from Egypt, Greece, and Rome. Even today, in this age of satellite television and high-speed Internet access, museums maintain their unique allure, continuing to play a vital role in connecting us with little-known terrains and the deep mysteries of our historical past. That's because, as Stephanie Moser argues in *Wondrous Curiosities*, museum displays don't just transmit knowledge—they actually create it.

Based on her exploration of the British Museum's world-famous collection of Egyptian antiquities, this pioneering study reveals the powerful role of museums in shaping our understanding of science, culture, and history. Drawing on guidebooks and archival documents, Moser demonstrates that this British exhibition of ancient Egyptian artifacts was central to the way we came to define the remarkable society that produced them. And she also reveals the specific strategies—such as using pattern and symmetry, juxtaposing different types of objects, and singling out particular items—that the British Museum and others used, and still use, in representing the past. With a wealth of illustrations and a detailed account of how the museum acquired and displayed its Egyptian collections, *Wondrous Curiosities* will fascinate curators and scholars of British history, Egyptology, art history, archaeology, and the history of science.

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